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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000057

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: TBILISI ELECTIONS UPDATE 01/15/2008

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: United National Council of Opposition (UNC) presidential candidate Levan Gachechiladze told the Ambassador on January 15 that the UNC is indeed in serious negotiation with President-Elect Mikheil Saakashvili on 11 key issues. The first concession, announced as a "first victory" to several thousand supporters in a street protest before the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), is that the GPB's chairman resigned. According to Gachechiladze, the board will be replaced with parity of 5 ruling United National Movement (UNM) representatives and 5 opposition members. The board will elect their own chairman. Burjanadze and opposition leader David Usupashvili are apparently formalizing the remainder of the negotiations. Publicly, UNC members and government authorities traded verbal blows on a late night political TV show January 14. The UNC claimed the election was stolen and demanded a recount. Government representatives claimed victory for Saakashvili and told the opposition to move on for the country's benefit. Separately, in an open letter to Saakashvili, Public Defender Sozar Subari acknowledged the former President as the winner of the election. Still, Subari said that Saakashvili must seriously respect human and individual rights, unlike during his first administration, if Georgia is to truly develop democratically. End Summary.

Gachechiladze Confirms Talks with Saakashvili  
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¶2. (C) On January 15, Gachechiladze told the Ambassador that the UNC is seriously negotiating with President-Elect Mikheil Saakashvili on 11 key issues. Gachechiladze said he has met multiple times with Saakashvili, and that Burjanadze and Usupashvili will formally document the remainder of the negotiations.

¶3. (C) The first concession, announced as a "first victory" by Gachechiladze to several thousand supporters in a street protest before the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), is that the GPB's chairman resigned. Acting President Burjanadze will ensure the board is replaced with parity of 5 ruling UNM representatives and 5 opposition members. The board will then elect its own chairman.

¶4. (C) The next few issues have apparently been agreed to, in principal, by both sides:

- Parliamentary elections will be held on May 4 or May 11 this Spring.
- There will be parity on all election commissions from the Central Election Commission (CEC) all the way down.
- Both sides will agree to an arbitration system, consisting of international observers, to settle future electoral disputes.

- An opposition member will be installed as the Vice-Chairman of the Chamber of Control in Parliament. This position serves as the internal inspector of Parliament.

- Prisoners arrested during the November 7, 2007 protests will be freed.

- The Constitution can be amended to incorporate mutually-agreed upon changes. Opposition leader Tina Khidasheli will co-chair this committee.

15. (C) Saakashvili refused the opposition's following two proposals:

- To hold direct elections of the Mayor of Tbilisi during the Spring parliamentary elections.

- To change the Chairman of the Supreme Court.

16. (C) One unresolved proposal is for Saakashvili to step down as leader of the UNM political party.

17. (C) Gachechiladze said that some problems obviously exist.

First is to ensure follow-through on the agreements by Saakashvili and his team. Second, Saakashvili apparently wants a military parade for the January 20 inauguration, which is a show-stopper for the UNC. They can live with a low-key ceremony, however. Third, the UNC would like to see a better, electronic method of counting the votes ready for the next election. Finally, the UNC wants international groups to monitor all of this carefully and guarantee its implementation.

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#### Opposition Maintains Public Pressure

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18. (C) Publicly on January 14, UNC members and government authorities traded verbal blows on a late night political TV show January 14. Host Inga Grigolia failed to moderate as the debate broke down into mutual accusations. The UNC claimed the election was stolen and demanded a recount. Government representatives claimed victory for Saakashvili and told the opposition to move on for the country's benefit.

Following an hour long protest on January 15 at the GPB (which approximately 3,000 people attended, by our count), the UNC has called for continued protests on January 16 in front of the Supreme Court.

#### Subari Addresses Saakashvili

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19. (U) In an open letter to Saakashvili, Public Defender Sozar Subari congratulated the former President as the winner of the election. Still, Subari said that Saakashvili must seriously respect human and individual rights, unlike during his first administration, if Georgia is to truly develop democratically. Subari warned that the current situation was provoked by Saakashvili's "trampling of human rights." Subari said the government must respect and safeguard the citizens' rights in all agencies. Specific areas he pointed out as needing immediate attention include the judiciary, Interior Ministry, the Prosecutor General's Office, the GPB, and the CEC.

#### Comment

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110. (C) Ambassador Tefft is meeting with additional opposition members and government officials to confirm further the reports above.

TEFFT